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12 February 1963

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Additional Information Requested by
Mr. Mahon for Inclusion in the Record
of the Hearings for 5 and 6 February 1963

1. Purpose of the Soviet Space Effort

a. We have not yet detected or identified any Soviet military space program.

b. We believe, however, that the USSR almost certainly is investigating the feasibility of space systems for military support and offensive and defensive weapons. We believe the USSR will produce and deploy those military space systems which are feasible and advantageous in comparison with other types of weapons and military equipment. The first Soviet military space vehicles are likely to be earth satellites used in support roles such as reconnaissance, early warning, weather surveillance, communications, and navigation.



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d. We do not believe that Soviet space technology has progressed sufficiently for the Soviets to have made the decision to proceed with large scale programs for offensive or defensive space weapons. Within this decade an orbital bombardment system almost certainly will not compare favorably with ICBMs as a military system.

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4. Purpose of the Soviet Military Presence in Cuba

a. The USSR is maintaining a substantial military presence in Cuba for a variety of military and political reasons.

b. This continuing military presence reflects the USSR's deep commitment of prestige to protect Cuba from external efforts to undermine and destroy the Castro regime. The Soviet leaders are anxious to avoid any appearance of a decline in their support for Castro. They feel obliged to demonstrate their determination to secure his regime against US pressures. Furthermore, Khrushchev strongly desires to avoid any impression that he might be induced to make further retreats on such vital issues as Berlin by another display of US firmness.

c. The Soviet leaders also place a high value on their position in Cuba as a demonstration of their equality with the US as a great power and their ability to respond to the chain of bases which the US has established around the periphery of the Soviet bloc by developing a strong military presence in an area traditionally within the US sphere of influence. They also believe that failure or inability of the US to overthrow a Communist-supported revolutionary regime in the Western Hemisphere will in the long run weaken US prestige and influence in Latin America as well as in the world at large.

d. In addition to these considerations bearing primarily on the USSR's posture vis-a-vis the US, the Soviet leaders probably have felt since the October crisis that any substantial reduction or complete withdrawal of their military personnel and equipment in Cuba would seriously aggravate their already strained relations with Castro. The Cubans were not consulted on Khrushchev's decision to withdraw the strategic missiles and they almost certainly resisted the removal of the IL-28's. They would bitterly oppose any Soviet decision to withdraw the SAMs, MIG-21s, KOMAR boats, and other advanced equipment.

e. Aside from these requirements of deterring external intervention and managing a difficult political relationship with the Castro government, the Soviets may believe that maintaining a substantial military presence will provide them with effective leverage to influence Castro's policies. They probably have been irritated by his unwillingness to support the USSR in its conflict with the Chinese Communists

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and his clearly expressed sympathy for Peiping's more militant, revolutionary line. The presence of Soviet forces could also enable Moscow to support Castro in suppressing any popular uprising and, possibly, to intervene decisively in any internal Cuban leadership struggle.

f. The possibility cannot be excluded, of course, that the USSR wishes to maintain a military presence so as to retain the option, at some more propitious point in the future, of taking action to foreclose US surveillance of Cuba or of proceeding with other activities which might be a direct threat to the US.

5. Restrictions on Publication. A restriction on "publication" of information on offensive weapons in Cuba was put into effect on 31 August, after the presence of defensive surface-to-air missiles was confirmed. A formal control system was instituted on 12 October. By "publication" is meant the use of such information in formal intelligence publications, which are widely circulated within the government through classified channels; these restrictions did not affect either the study and evaluation of incoming information by analysts or the dissemination of their findings to key policy-makers.

6. Differences in dates on charts. The Intelligence Community maintains a continuous running count both on Soviet military equipment and on Soviet personnel in Cuba. The figures presented on the two charts were chosen for particular illustrative purposes. The equipment chart was designed to show the extent of build-up; the dates 1 July (before the build-up), 1 November (the peak of the build-up), and 1 February (the present) were selected. The personnel chart was designed to show the evolution of our personnel estimates over the period in relation to statements on specific dates by government officials. More dates were required for this purpose: 1 July (before the build-up); 1 August and 1 September (our initial assessments of personnel arrivals); 19 September (date of the National Intelligence Estimate on Cuba); 22 October (date of the President's speech); 1 December (date by which we had reassessed our information on the peak build-up); 15 December (date by which we had made a detailed assessment of those remaining after the withdrawals); and 1 February (the present).

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